



MEDIA RELEASE

Funding Assistance to Address the Plight of Rural Kindergartens

20 May 2016

A recent announcement by the State Government of changes to the funding formula applicable to rural kindergartens is welcome news indeed, and a cause for much joy throughout the local kindergarten community.

The Minister for Families and Children, The Hon Jenny Mikakos MLC, has announced a four year funding commitment that will assist all rural kindergartens, but particularly those experiencing low enrolment numbers and/or fluctuating levels of enrolment.

Kindergarten services in rural towns across Victoria face significant and ongoing challenges in sustaining viable and high quality kindergarten programs for local families. The Victorian Government's additional \$4.4 Million over 4 years is an initiative that will ensure that kindergartens remain an important part of all rural communities and that rural children can continue to access high quality early childhood education, regardless of where they live.

A new base level of funding will be introduced in 2017 for rural kindergarten services. All rural classified services with 18 or fewer enrolments will receive a minimum of \$76,739 in per capita funding (equivalent to 18 enrolments at the rural per capita rate).

Services with 19 or more enrolments will continue to receive the rural per capita rate for all enrolments up to 45 children, and where applicable, the standard per capita rate for the 46th enrolment and above.

The new base level of funding introduces a simpler payment model by replacing the small rural per capita rate and small rural grant. This initiative will increase funding at all enrolment points for small rural kindergartens and provide a predictable level of funding to minimise the impact of year on year enrolment fluctuations.

"The Buloke Shire Council has long advocated for a change to the kindergarten funding formula that for years has disadvantaged small rural kindergartens", said Mayor Cr Reid Mather.

"Our Buloke kindergartens continue to experience significant fluctuations in enrolment numbers and this new base level of funding will assist our services to more effectively plan their programs in advance".

"Council is indeed very thankful for the committed advocacy on this important issue, both by its local communities and also the YMCA of Ballarat as the serviced provider at four of the five kindergartens in Buloke."

"This might be the first example of Council's **Rural Living** campaign gaining traction. The campaign seeks minimum base service levels for a range of important services that contribute to the liveability of our communities", Cr Mather concluded.

End release

For further information contact Travis Fitzgibbon on 1300 520 520